

**2021-2022**

**Physician Assistant Program Didactic Student  
Handbook**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

School of Medicine

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA-COLUMBIA  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM  
DIDACTIC STUDENT HANDBOOK  
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## PREFACE

A warm welcome to our students from the faculty and staff of the UofSC Physician Assistant (PA) Program. We wish you all the best in your endeavors as you embark on this journey to pursue your education and successful career as a physician assistant. You will be asked to dedicate the next twenty-seven months to an intensely structured learning program. This program is designed to build upon both the academic and clinical backgrounds you have previously developed prior to being accepted into our program. You will learn all the necessary attributes to succeed in a profession which provides high quality health care including primary, specialty, and preventive medical care in various disciplines of medicine. We are committed to your success and we will guide you in your studies as you take on the role of becoming leader and an advocate in the physician assistant profession.

The UofSC PA Program developed this handbook for students preparing to enter this rigorous master's degree program. The information herein is available to help augment the students' journey as he or she matriculates at the University of South Carolina and to provide details that are unique to students in the PA program. Description of campus-wide policies and procedures are provided on line at:

[Office of the Provost - Policies and Procedures Manual](#)

PA students are responsible for reviewing and adhering to the policies and procedures of the University as well as those described in this handbook.

All policies in this handbook apply to all PA students, principal faculty, and the program director regardless of location.<sup>1</sup>

The program must define, publish, make readily available, and consistently apply its policies and practices to all students.<sup>2</sup>

This handbook will be reviewed with the PA students during orientation week and students will sign an acknowledgement of understanding to be maintained in their student file.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or any of the faculty or staff members in the department.

On behalf of the PA Program faculty and staff, I extend our best wishes for a successful and rewarding educational experience. We look forward to working with you as you begin your new career!

Very respectfully,

Rita M. Dixon, MPAS, PA-C  
Interim Program Director

## **QUICK REFERENCES**

Alumni Center  
900 Senate Street  
Phone: (803) 777-4111

UofSC Bookstore  
The Russell House  
1400 Greene Street  
Phone: (803) 777-4160  
[UofSC Official Bookstore](#)

Bursar's office  
1244 Blossom Street  
Phone: 803-777-4233  
[Bursar's Office](#)  
[bursar@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:bursar@mailbox.sc.edu)

UofSC Law Enforcement and Safety  
Phone: (803) 777-4215 (dispatch)  
[Law Enforcement and Safety](#)

Campus Recreation  
Phone: (803) 576-9375  
[Campus Recreation](#)

UofSC SOM Office of Information Technology  
(OIT) HELP Desk  
(803) 545-5100

Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
Osborne Administration  
Room 107B  
Columbia, SC 29208  
Phone: (803) 777-9943  
[Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)

Financial Aid and Scholarships  
1244 Blossom Street Suite 200  
Phone: (803) 777-8134  
[Financial Aid and Scholarships](#)

School of Medicine Financial Aid  
Jerel Arceneaux  
VA Campus Bldg. 3 Room 126  
Phone: (803) 216-3629  
[jerel.arceneaux@uscmed.sc.edu](mailto:jerel.arceneaux@uscmed.sc.edu)

UofSC School of Medicine Library  
6311 Garners Ferry Road  
Phone: (803) 216-3200 (circulation)  
Phone: (803) 216-3313 (reference)

Parking  
School of Medicine Support Services  
Kathy Flanagan  
Phone: (803) 216-3150  
[kathy.flanagan@uscmed.sc.edu](mailto:kathy.flanagan@uscmed.sc.edu)

Student Health Services  
1409 Devine Street  
Phone: (803) 777-3175

Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
Thomson Student Health Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> Floors  
1401 Devine Street  
Counseling Phone: (803) 777-5223  
Psychiatry Phone: (803) 777-1833  
[Student Health Services - Mental Health](#)  
24-Hour Suicide Hotline: 800-273-8255

Registrar  
1244 Blossom Street  
Phone: (803) 777-5555  
[University Registrar](#)

Student Disability Resource Center  
MAIN OFFICE  
1705 College Street  
Close-Hipp, Suite 102  
TEST PROCTORING LAB  
Close-Hipp, Room 201  
Assistive Technology  
Close-Hipp, Suite 102N  
Phone: 803-777-6142  
[Student Disability Resource Center](#)  
[sadrc@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sadrc@mailbox.sc.edu)

Department of Student Life  
Russell House  
1400 Greene Street Suite 115  
Phone: (803) 777-5782  
[Student Affairs and Academic Support - Student Life](#)

## **SECTION 1 HISTORY OF THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROFESSION**

### **History of the Physician Assistant (PA) Profession**

Experience for the prototype PA began with a large number of military medics and medical corpsmen returning from the Vietnam War in the late 1960's. Medics in the field and military-trained assistants in hospitals and clinics proved effective based on their experience in the medical arena. This soon translated to civilian life as medical visionaries recognized the talents of those individuals as a solution to current problems of medical under-staffing and inaccessibility to primary care.

Formal training of physician extenders began at Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina in 1965. Now, there are now 260 accredited programs across the nation educating PAs for the health care delivery system and that number is growing. The typical PA student tends to be professionally, scholastically, and often chronologically more mature at the entry level than the usual medical student. This results from the fact that most programs draw from a pool of postgraduate and professional applicants who choose the PA profession out of their desire for increased service and productivity in the health care field. Typical attributes of these individuals are an ardent desire to serve, outstanding interpersonal skills, and a strong grasp of the scientific process and biomedical studies. The keen competition for positions and the intensity of the curriculum in most programs generally produce high quality, highly motivated, and self-disciplined professionals.

In 1971, standards established the minimal expectations of quality in PA education. These standards, adopted by seven national medical organizations, determine the minimum requirements for a PA program to achieve accreditation. Only graduates from accredited PA programs may sit for the national certifying examination. All fifty states, the District of Columbia and all American territories require certification by the National Commission for Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA), which involves successful passage of a comprehensive objective examination at the national level in order to be licensed to provide health care as a PA.

**SECTION 2**  
**MISSION STATEMENTS, PROGRAM GOALS AND COMPETENCIES,**  
**ACCREDITATION AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS**

**UofSC System Mission Statement**

**Approved by the Board of Trustees - July 2010**

The primary mission of the University of South Carolina is the education of the state's diverse citizens through teaching, research, creative activity, and service. Founded in 1801, the University of South Carolina system is the largest university in the state, serving more than 41,000 students from its flagship Columbia campus, three senior campuses (Aiken, Beaufort, and Upstate), and four regional campuses (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, and Union).

The University of South Carolina is a public institution offering degree programs at the associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Through the primary method of classroom and laboratory instruction and through a secondary method of distance education delivered via the Internet, teleconference and electronic media, degree programs are offered in the following areas: arts and sciences; education; engineering and computing; hospitality, retail, and sport management; mass communications and information studies; music; public health; and social work, and in professional programs such as business, law, medicine, nursing, and pharmacy.

With a flagship campus recognized by the Carnegie Foundation as a top research and service institution and nationally ranked in start-up businesses, and an eight-campus system that confers nearly 40% of all bachelor's and graduate degrees awarded at public institutions in South Carolina, the University has a profound relevance, reach, and impact on the people of the state. The University of South Carolina provides all students with the highest-quality education, including the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for success and responsible citizenship in a complex and changing world through engagement in nationally and internationally ranked research, scholarship, service, and artistic creation.

**UofSC - Columbia**

**Accreditations of Academic Programs**

The University of South Carolina is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associates, bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees.

**School of Medicine Vision Statement 2008:**

The UofSC SOM will be an Academic Medical Center that is:

- Locally eminent
- Regionally prominent
- Nationally renowned
- Globally recognized

### **UofSC School of Medicine Mission Statement**

The mission of the UofSC SOM is to transform healthcare in South Carolina and beyond through exemplary education, research and quality patient care.

### **UofSC School of Medicine Guiding Principles**

1. We provide a student-responsive learning environment with a competency based curriculum that stimulates excellence in educational achievement and inspires lifelong learning.
2. We champion patient-centered, compassionate and evidence-based medical practice.
3. We advocate for the elimination of disparities in health care and the promotion of good public health policy.
4. We engage our affiliated institutions and community partners in our educational, research, and clinical service programs.
5. We foster collaboration with other academic institutions and medical centers.
6. We pursue our vision and mission in a results-oriented, transparent, inclusive, participatory, equitable, and accountable manner.
7. We allocate our resources in alignment with our Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles.
8. We adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards, exhibiting good judgment, respecting diversity and promoting collegiality.

### **UofSC School of Medicine Accreditation**

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), the accrediting authority for medical education programs leading to an M.D. degree in the U.S. and Canadian medical schools, has granted the University of South Carolina School of Medicine full accreditation.

### **Physician Assistant Program Mission Statement**

The UofSC School of Medicine-Columbia Masters in Science in Physician Assistant Studies Program strives to produce highly competent, compassionate physician assistants who are committed to lifelong learning and advancing the PA profession. The program is dedicated to producing physician assistants who deliver high-quality, patient-centered care, excel as members of an interprofessional health care team, while making significant contributions to the health care needs of South Carolina and the nation.

### **PA Program Vision:**

We prepare Physician Assistant graduates to improve access to primary medical care for the citizens of rural and medically-underserved populations of South Carolina, and the nation.

**PA Program Goals:**

1. Enroll diverse and highly-qualified students who reflect the dynamic population of South Carolina and the nation.
2. Encourage life-long professional involvement, scholarly activity, leadership and service.
3. Maintain a level of first-time PANCE pass rates that meets or exceeds the national average.
4. Maintain an overall graduation rate of 94 percent (current Physician Assistant Education Association national average) or better for entering University of South Carolina Physician Assistant students.
5. Maintain an accredited program with an innovative curriculum that prepares entry-level graduates for the contemporary practice of medicine.

**Success of the Program in Achieving its Goals:<sup>3</sup>**

The success of the program achieving its goals can be found at:

[UofSC PA Program Goals](#)

**PANCE Pass rate:<sup>4</sup>**

See Program Goal number three in link above

**PA Program Competencies:**

Students of the UofSC Physician Assistant Program will build their knowledge and skills throughout their didactic, clinical, and summative training to achieve the following program competencies:

**KNOWLEDGE:**

1. Possess medical knowledge to evaluate and manage medical and surgical conditions of patients of all ages.
2. Possess pharmacology knowledge to prescribe medications appropriately bearing in mind patient safety, cost, and potential for abuse.

**INTERPERSONAL SKILLS:**

1. Elicit an accurate and appropriate problem-focused or comprehensive medical history using appropriate patient-centered interpersonal communication (verbal and non-verbal).
2. Utilizing the clinical presentation and diagnostic testing results, provide clear, provide concise oral presentations to other healthcare professionals and document accurate patient notes and orders.
3. Professionally exhibit interprofessional teamwork to improve patient care.
4. Provide relevant education to patients and families including treatment, compliance, available resources, and activity/lifestyle modification.

**CLINICAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS:**

1. Perform a problem-focused or comprehensive physical exam directly related to the medical history and be able to recognize normal and abnormal health states.
2. Practice strategies to improve patient safety and decrease medical errors in patient care.
3. Demonstrate entry-level proficiency for technical skills and clinical procedures common to primary care practice.



### **PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS:**

1. Practice cultural awareness when working with diverse patient populations.
2. Develop life-long learning skills by using evidence-based medicine strategies and staying current with clinical practice guidelines.
3. Demonstrate the attributes of professional and ethical behavior to include resiliency, flexibility, adaptability, altruism, and ability to overcome adversity when evaluating and managing patients.

### **CLINICAL REASONING AND PROBLEM SOLVING:**

1. Order and interpret appropriate, cost-effective laboratory or diagnostic studies to determine the differential diagnosis.
2. Demonstrate clinical reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving to develop differential diagnoses and select the most likely diagnosis.

### **PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM ACCREDITATION<sup>5</sup>**

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA) granted **Accreditation-Continued** status to the University of South Carolina School of Medicine-Columbia Physician Assistant Program sponsored by University of South Carolina School of Medicine-Columbia in June 2021. Accreditation-Continued is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA *Standards*.

Accreditation remains in effect until the program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for failure to comply with the *Standards*. The approximate date for the next validation review of the program by the ARC-PA will be June 2031. The review date is contingent upon continued compliance with the Accreditation *Standards* and ARC-PA policy.

The program's accreditation history can be viewed on the ARC-PA website at <http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation-history-university-of-south-carolina/>.

Accreditation standards are available at:

[5th Edition of the ARC-PA Standards](#)

12000 Findley Road, Suite 150, Johns Creek, GA 30097, (770) 476-1224

### **Academic Degree Offered<sup>6</sup>**

#### **Master of Science - Physician Assistant Studies, MS-PAS Degree**

The University of South Carolina School of Medicine Physician Assistant Studies Program will confer a Master of Science – Physician Assistant Studies degree upon completion of the 27 month educational program. Our program consists of 15 months of didactic education (68 Semester Credit Hours) and 12 months of supervised clinical practice experience with summative and capstone courses (46 hours) for a total of 114 credit hours.

## **PA Program Specific Technical Standards for Admissions and Retention**

The University of South Carolina School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program has adopted the following technical standards which were adapted from the School of Medicine: All candidates for admission should possess sufficient intellectual capacity, physical ability, emotional and psychological stability, interpersonal sensitivity, and communication skills to acquire the scientific knowledge, interpersonal and technical competencies, professional attitudes, and clinical abilities required to pursue any pathway of graduate medical education and to enter the practice of medicine. All candidates should be aware that the academic and clinical responsibilities of physician assistant students will, at times, require their presence during day, evening and overnight hours, seven days per week. Candidates must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress.

While the University Of South Carolina School Of Medicine Physician Assistant Program fully endorses the spirit and intent of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992, it also acknowledges that certain minimum technical standards must be present in candidates for admission, retention and graduation. Those individuals who would constitute a direct threat to the health or safety of themselves or others are not considered suitable candidates for admission or retention in physician assistant school. Therefore, the Physician Assistant Program has established the following technical standards for admission and the candidates must fulfill the minimum academic requirements for admission.

1. All candidates for the PA degree must complete all required courses and supervised clinical practicum experiences as indicated in the Graduate School Bulletin.
2. All candidates for admission and all candidates for the PA degree must possess sufficient physical, intellectual, interpersonal, social, emotional, psychological, and communication abilities to:
  - (a) establish appropriate relationships with a wide range of faculty members, professional colleagues, and patients. Candidates should possess the personal qualities of integrity, empathy, concern for the welfare of others, commitment to life-long learning, and motivation. They must possess the emotional and psychological health required for the full use of their intellectual abilities; the exercise of good judgment; the prompt completion of all responsibilities associated with the diagnosis and care of patients; and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, patients' families, and professional colleagues. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, to be flexible, and to function in the face of ambiguities inherent in any clinical situation. Candidates must be able to speak, to hear, to read, to write, and to observe patients in order to elicit information, to describe changes in mood, activity, posture, and behavior, and to perceive nonverbal communications. Candidates must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in the English language in oral and written form with all members of the health care team. Candidates must be mobile and able to function independently within the clinical environment.
  - (b) obtain a medical history and perform physical and mental examinations with a wide variety of patients. Candidates must be able to observe patients accurately both close at hand and at a distance. Observation requires the functional use of the sense of vision and other sensory modalities and is enhanced by the functional use of the sense of smell. Candidates must have sufficient exteroceptive sense (touch, pain, and temperature), proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, and vibratory), and

motor function to carry out the requirements of the physical examination. Candidates must have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic operations. They must be able to use effectively and in a coordinated manner those standard instruments necessary for a physical examination (e.g., stethoscope, otoscope, sphygmomanometer, ophthalmoscope, and reflex hammer). Candidates must be able to execute motor movements required to provide general and emergency treatment to patients, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation, administration of intravenous medication, application of pressure to stop bleeding, intubation, suturing of simple wounds, and performance of obstetrical maneuvers; all such actions require coordination of both fine and gross muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of touch and vision.

(c) conduct tests and perform laboratory work. Candidates must be able to observe demonstrations, collect data, and participate in experiments and dissections in the basic sciences, including, but not limited to, demonstrations in animals, microbiologic cultures, and microscopic studies of microorganisms and tissues in normal and pathologic states. They must be able to understand basic laboratory studies and interpret their results, draw arterial and venous blood, and carry out diagnostic procedures (e.g., proctoscopy, and paracentesis).

(d) ultimately make logical diagnostic and therapeutic judgments. Candidates must be able to make measurements, calculate, and reason; to analyze, integrate, and synthesize data; and to problem-solve. Candidates must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures. Candidates must be able to integrate rapidly, consistently, and accurately all data received by whatever sense(s) employed.

(e) operate a motor vehicle. Candidates will be responsible for their own transportation to and from classes and clinical rotation sites and must have reliable transportation and a valid driver's license.

In evaluating candidates for admission and candidates for the PA degree, it is essential that the integrity of the curriculum be maintained, that those elements deemed necessary for the education of a physician assistant be preserved, and that the health and safety of patients be maintained. While compensation, modification, and accommodation can be made for some disabilities on the part of candidates, candidates must be able to perform the duties of a student and of a physician assistant in a reasonably independent manner. The use of a trained intermediary would compromise a candidate's judgment by another person's powers of selection and observation. Therefore, the use of trained intermediaries to assist students in meeting the technical standards for admission, retention, or graduation is not permitted.

The Physician Assistant Program will consider for admission any candidate who has the ability to perform or to learn to perform the skills and abilities specified in these technical standards. Candidates for the PA degree will be assessed at regular intervals not only on the basis of their academic abilities, but also on the basis of their non-academic (physical, interpersonal, communication, psychological, and emotional) abilities to meet the requirements of the curriculum and to graduate as skilled and effective medical practitioners.

## **SECTION 3 ACADEMIC STANDARDS<sup>7</sup>**

### **Academic & Progression Standards**

The academic promotion and progression standards utilized by the PA program will be published annually in the UofSC Bulletin. During orientation week, students will be advised of these standards as well as the expectation that all students adhere to the student honor code and Carolinian Creed.

It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina Columbia to steadfastly adhere to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this Honor Code or who knowingly assists another to violate this Honor Code shall be subject to disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

#### [Academic Responsibility - The Honor Code](#)

Students will be required to sign the Honor Code Pledge as well as a receipt acknowledging the progression and promotion standards at that time.

The PA Faculty will be alerted to student policies in the Bulletin as well as faculty policies in the Faculty Handbook and on the Academic Affairs web site:

#### [Office of the Provost - Faculty Manuals](#)

#### [Office of the Provost - Policies and Procedures Manual](#)

### **Didactic Progression Requirements: (To progress from one semester to the next in good standing)<sup>8</sup>**

To qualify for progression at the end of each semester the student must:

1. Follow the approved course of study for that semester, satisfactorily completing all courses with a letter grade of C or better.
2. Maintain an overall cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 (letter grade B).
  - a. If a student's GPA drops below 3.0, he/she will be placed on Academic Probation and given ONE semester to raise their cumulative GPA to  $\geq 3.0$  or risk dismissal from the program.
3. Demonstrate proficiency in all PA competencies.
4. Settle all financial accounts with the university.
5. Attend all events deemed as mandatory by the PA Program faculty which may include, but are not limited to: orientation, guest lectures, conferences, meetings, dinners, White Coat Ceremony, Grand Rounds and other activities.

### **Graduation Requirements:<sup>8</sup>**

In order to be recommended for a degree in the Physician Assistant program a candidate must comply with the following conditions:

1. The expected matriculation for the program is 27 months. However, students may be

afforded an extra four months, equal to one semester, or 31 months to complete the program in certain instances recommended by the SPPC and approved by the program director. Any absences longer than four months will require an approved leave of absence no greater than one year and deceleration to the following cohort.

2. The candidate must complete all required courses of the professional curriculum with a minimum grade point average of  $\geq 3.0$  and successfully complete the summative experience with a passing grade.
3. The candidate must demonstrate professionalism expected of a student in the PA profession which is acceptable to the faculty and in accordance with the AAPA Code of Ethics.
4. The candidate must discharge all financial obligations to the university and affiliated organizations.

#### **Didactic Academic Standards:**

- To remain in good standing, all PA students must maintain a minimum overall cumulative GPA of 3.0 or “Pass” in all performance-based rated courses. Failure to meet this standard will result in the student being placed on Academic Probation and given ONE semester to raise their cumulative GPA to  $\geq 3.0$  or risk dismissal from the program.

#### **Testing Policies:**

Students are responsible for the course learning objectives whether or not they are covered in lectures. Exam questions may be from textbooks, lectures, and/or other assigned reading/handouts. All questions will be based on both general course and specific lecture objectives.

1. Students are expected to take course examinations at the designated time.

Note: If a student is not seated in the classroom at the beginning of an exam, he/she will not be allowed to enter the testing location late and take the exam. The student will need to contact the Course Director after the exam to discuss testing options.

2. In the event of illness or personal emergency on the day of an examination:
  - The student must contact the Director of Didactic Education and the Course Director before the exam and inform them that they are unable to take the test.
  - A student who has missed an examination because of illness or personal crisis will be expected to take the examination within 48 hours or during the first day back in class (whichever occurs first).
  - If the time period becomes longer than 48 hours or if the absence was not approved by the Course Director and Director of Didactic Education in advance, the student's grade for the exam will be no higher than the class average regardless of their score.
    - Please refer to the general PA program attendance policies and procedures regarding excused absences.
  - Students who have a serious and/or prolonged illness will be reviewed individually and arrangements will be made accordingly.

3. All exams administered through the ExamSoft software should be downloaded to the student's computer preferably the evening prior to the exam, but no later than one hour prior to the scheduled exam.
4. With all courses that are directly conducted by the Physician Assistant Program, the following guidelines during testing must be followed:
  - Students are not permitted to talk once entering the classroom where testing is to occur. Do not communicate with other students in any way during exams or evaluation sessions.
  - Students must turn off cell phones and place all personal belongings in their lockers. Smartwatches and similar devices are not permitted during testing.
  - Once the exam has begun, the proctor will not answer any questions. Students should remain in their seats at all times until they have finished the examination. Students may be excused during the examination one at a time in order to use the restroom.
  - The duration of each exam will be determined by the Course Director with a minimum time of one minute per question.
  - Upon completing and submitting your exam, please quietly leave the testing area.
  - Students are not permitted to disseminate exam content after completion of the exam.
  - Any questions or discrepancies regarding an exam during the academic year should be addressed in writing, citing the discrepancy and listing references, and submitted to the Course Director.
  - Any concerns with test integrity should be raised within 72 hours of the examination.

### **Challenges Pertaining to Examination Questions**

In the event a student wishes to challenge an examination question, the student must address this issue in writing using the form provided prior to each exam by the faculty member administering the examination. These forms should be submitted to the proctor prior to exiting the exam.

The student's question or concern must address a specific issue regarding the examination question or assignment, such as having multiple correct answers, having no correct answers, topic was not in objectives, etc. An explanation to support the student's argument must be made using supporting documentation referencing assigned readings and objectives from the syllabus. Challenges based on the PowerPoints are acceptable, however assigned readings will take preference. The Course Director will consider the student's challenge and will respond in writing (email is acceptable) within 3 days as to their decision regarding the question being challenged.

### **Exam Review**

After an exam has been completed, if students have questions about the content that they missed can schedule an appointment with the Course Director. The Course Director will provide the student with a printout that will address the specific content areas that were missed, but will not provide access to the actual exam questions/answers for review. The Course Director may also suggest additional reading material in the areas of deficiency. The student is welcome to ask any content specific questions that they have during this time. These reviews should be scheduled within 7 days from the original test date.

## Didactic Remediation Policy<sup>9</sup>

- **Remediation** will be applied to **all exam scores that are less than 70%**. Quizzes are not eligible for remediation. The specific remediation activity will be at the discretion of the Course Director or their designee. If remediation is required and successfully completed, the final recorded exam grade will be rounded up to a 70. Each remediation activity must be passed with at least a 70% to ensure there is an understanding of the material. If a student does not pass a remediation activity, the student must appear before the Student Progress and Promotion Committee (SPPC). If an original exam score is less than 65%, that particular exam will automatically be the exam that is remediated for a grade change the first time that it occurs within a course. Only one exam per course can be remediated for a grade change. Any original exam grade that falls between 65 and 69 can be at the discretion of the student as to whether or not a successful remediation would constitute the use of the one remediation for a grade change for the course. Course Directors must be notified in writing prior to completing the remediation activity of the student's decision for this optional use of remediation for a grade change. If remediation for a grade change is deferred by the student, and that student ends up doing well enough to not need additional remediation within the course, there will not be any retroactive adjustment of grades. All remediation activities should occur within 7 course calendar days from notification of the failing grade.
- Cumulative final exams will not be remediated. If a student fails a cumulative final exam, the student must appear before the SPPC.
- **70% is the minimum passing grade for all courses.**
- **Grading Scale is as follows:**

A	90-100
B+	87-89
B	80-86
C+	77-79
C	69.5-76
F	69.4 or below

## Student Advising Policy

Students will be assigned to a faculty mentor prior to or during orientation. Mentors are PA faculty and may include the Medical Director of the PA Program. Students will meet at least one time per semester with their assigned mentor to discuss their progress in the program. Students may be required to meet more frequently or may personally request to meet more frequently with their mentor at any time.

## Student Progress and Promotion Committee (SPPC)

1. Role of the Committee  
The SPPC is a standing committee of the PA program. It has responsibility for the evaluation of student academic and professional progress and to make recommendations for action to the program director.

The committee may recommend to the program director a formal acknowledgement of a student's success and any of the following actions:

- Recommendations for academic progress
- Academic Warning
- Academic Probation/Deceleration
- Academic Dismissal
- Disciplinary Probation
- Disciplinary Dismissal
- Voluntary Withdrawal
- Leave of Absence
- Remediation Plans

2. Composition of the committee:

The SPPC is comprised of the core faculty members within the PA program excluding the program director. The chair of the committee is the Medical Director. Subcommittees may be appointed by the chair to consider and make recommendations on individual student situations.

3. Appearance before the Committee

Students in the PA Program are expected to make satisfactory academic and professional progress toward completion of the degree requirements. Any student not making satisfactory progress is referred to the SPPC to determine appropriate actions to further support the student's success. At times, circumstances may warrant a recommendation of dismissal. A student appearance before the committee will be arranged by the chair and, when possible, confirmed in writing prior to the meeting. Students will be notified of the final decision of the program director in writing within 5 business days after the meeting.

### **Definitions of Terms**

**Academic Dismissal** - The student has not met the minimum academic standards of the program and will not be allowed to continue in the program.

**Academic Probation** - The student has not met the minimum academic or professional standards of the program and will be required to meet certain standards established by the SPPC for a defined period of time. Academic probation for one semester is automatic if a student does not meet the standards of academic progress which is maintaining a cumulative GPA  $\geq 3.0$  throughout the duration of the program. Students have a total time of one semester from the time that they are placed on academic probation to bring their cumulative GPA  $\geq 3.0$ . Failure to achieve this standard by the end of one semester may result in academic dismissal.

**Academic Warning** - A cautionary notice from the program director, on recommendation of the SPPC, that the student is not meeting minimum academic standards of the program in a current course or clinical rotation in progress. If improvements are not made, further academic consequences may result.

**Rotation** - A supervised clinical practice experience (SCPE) in a defined area of medicine characterized by utilizing clinical knowledge and skills in working with patients, occurring in the clinical phase of the PA Program.



**Course** - A unit of instruction which may involve lectures, observation, performance, assignments and evaluation which usually takes place in the classroom or laboratory occurring primarily in the didactic phase of the PA program.

**Disciplinary Dismissal** - The student has failed to comply with program requirements or policy related to conduct or professional behavior and may result in dismissal from the program.

**Disciplinary Probation** - The student has failed to comply with program requirements or policy related to conduct or professional behavior and will be required to meet certain standards established by the program for a defined period of time. Failure to meet the established standards may result in termination of enrollment via voluntary withdrawal or disciplinary dismissal.

**Good Standing** - The student is currently meeting all requirements for satisfactory academic progress and all other requirements of the program.

**Leave of Absence** - A student is granted formal permission or required to delay progression through the PA program due to extenuating circumstances. The length of the leave of absence will not exceed one year from the time the leave is approved.

**Voluntary Withdrawal** - The student has not met the minimum academic standards or other requirements of the program and agrees to withdraw from the program or simply wishes to withdraw for personal reasons.

### **Didactic Academic Probation, Deceleration, Withdrawal, and Dismissal Policies and Procedures<sup>9,10</sup>**

#### **ACADEMIC PROBATION POLICY (THE 3.00 RULE)**

Students whose cumulative GPA drops below 3.00 (B) will be placed on academic probation and allowed ONE semester to raise the GPA to  $\geq 3.00$ . In the case of conversion of grades of incomplete that cause a cumulative GPA to drop below 3.0, a student will be placed on academic probation at the end of the semester in which the grade is posted. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below the required minimum of 3.0 by receiving a grade for a course in which they received an incomplete will be granted ONE semester of probation dating from the semester in which the grade is received by the registrar to raise their cumulative GPA to  $\geq 3.0$ . Deadlines for progression are at the end of each academic semester or at the end an academic probation period of one semester. Students that fail to earn a cumulative 3.00 GPA during the academic probationary period will not be permitted to enroll in further graduate courses and will meet the SPPC who will provide recommendations which may include dismissal.

#### **APPEALS FOR EXTENSION OF PROBATION**

The current policy of The Graduate School on Academic Probation and Suspension stipulates that when a degree-seeking graduate student's cumulative graduate grade point average (GPA) falls below 3.0, the student is placed on academic probation. According to PA program policy, the student has ONE semester from the academic probation term to improve his/her cumulative graduate GPA to  $\geq 3.0$ . Failing to meet this condition will result in meeting the SPPC possible dismissal from the program.

Appeals will be reviewed first by the SPPC and then forwarded to the program director. Appeals may then be forwarded to the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies and subsequently the Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School for final disposition. Guidelines for appeals are listed below or see this website:

### [Appeal of Academic Decisions](#)

Appeal of Academic Decisions (Excerpt from the UofSC Graduate Academic regulations)

“Appeals seeking to reverse or modify decisions made at a lower level of authority should be filed according to the established procedures with the student’s academic unit. Students should file appeals with the dean of The Graduate School only after the internal processes for appeals and grievances within the academic program, school and/or college have been exhausted.

The Graduate School will accept appeals on academic matters only. Disagreement with a grade assigned in a course is not a basis for appeal to The Graduate School, but should be directed to the course instructor.

Appeals to the dean of The Graduate School must be submitted in writing and must include the name, student number, the signature of the appellant, and a full description of the circumstances of the appeal. Student appeals for reversal of departmental decisions are only accepted for consideration when questions such as inequitable application of regulations, bias, conflict with regulations, or extenuating circumstances are cited as grounds for appeal.

The Dean of The Graduate School will attempt to resolve appeals filed with The Graduate School and will refer unresolved issues to the Graduate Council, whose decision will be the final action taken within The Graduate School. Any further appeal must be directed to the Office of the Provost. Graduate student appeals of disciplinary decisions reached under the Rule of Academic Responsibility procedures of the University must be made to the University Committee on Academic Responsibility.”

### **DECCELERATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Deceleration of a student is defined as a student leaving their current cohort to join a cohort following behind with the goal to satisfactorily completing the program with the new cohort. Deceleration can be recommended by the SPPC if a student requires a leave of absence that the student cannot make up within one semester and would not allow the student to complete the program in 31 months. Students may request to be decelerated if an extenuating circumstance occurs requiring a leave of absence that may include a prolonged illness, pregnancy, injury, or mental health issue. Deceleration will only be offered in rare instances. In most cases, deceleration will not be offered to students who are not meeting academic standards.

Procedures for deceleration are as follows:

1. Deceleration has been recommended for the student by the SPPC in writing and supported and signed by the program director.
2. The program director will convey recommendations and expectations to the student in writing. The student must sign the proposed plan.
3. The deceleration plan will then be forwarded to the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies and subsequently the Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School for validation. Any changes will be conveyed to the student through the program director.

4. The student then enrolls and becomes a member of the following cohort at the appropriate time.

## **WITHDRAWAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

The Graduate School policy regarding withdrawal can be found at:

### [Withdrawal from All Courses](#)

The program procedure for the withdrawal are as follows:

1. Student first needs to notify the program director of desire to withdraw by way of a scheduled appointment.
2. Program Director signs a form acknowledging the student's desire to withdraw from the program.
3. Student takes the signed form to the Registrar for processing.
4. A student will not automatically be withdrawn from the program if he/she stops attending class. It is the student's responsibility to follow the appropriate procedures to withdraw from the program.

## **DISMISSAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Recommendation for dismissal may result from any of the following:

- Any student earning a failing grade in any course or SCPE
- Any student earning two grades of C or C+ in a single semester
- Any student earning a total of three grades of C or C+ throughout the entire program
- Obtaining a cumulative GPA of <3.0 for more than a single semester
- Any student failing to meet the requirements of a course as stipulated in the syllabus
- Failure to comply with professional behavioral standards as deemed appropriate by the faculty of the PA program including the Medical Director with guidance from the AAPA Guidelines for Ethical Conduct

Dismissal procedures:

- The student meets the SPPC and dismissal is recommended
- The student meets with the program director and decision to dismiss is upheld. A letter of dismissal is signed by both the student and program director. Options for appeal are discussed including Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School, and Provost. Consultation with the Graduate School Ombuds is also offered.
- The student is then dismissed from the program and no longer able to register or attend further coursework even if an appeal is initiated. The program notifies the Registrar and the Bursar's Office that the student is no longer part of the program.

## **Academic Grievance Policy - PA Program<sup>11,12</sup>**

### [Academic Grievance Policy](#)

## **Non-academic Grievance Policy – PA Program<sup>11,12</sup>**

[Non-academic Grievance Policy](#)

**Tuition Refund Policy<sup>13</sup>**

[Refund Policy](#)

**Access to Student Record<sup>14,15</sup>**

- Students will not be allowed to access another student's record.
- To access their own PA student file, the student must make the request in writing to the program director and they will be allowed to review their student file under supervision.
- The student may access their own electronic academic records in the Banner system and Blackboard at any time.
- All student health records, except immunization records, are confidential and maintained at the UofSC SOM Student Health Nurse. A copy of the student's immunization record will be kept on file by the PA Program for reporting to supervised clinical practice experience (SCPE) sites.

## **SECTION 4 DRESS CODE, SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY, CLASSROOM CONDUCT, IMMUNIZATIONS AND HAZARDS**

### **Dress Code**

In keeping with the professional nature of the UofSC program, all PA students are expected to dress in an appropriate, professional manner both in the classroom and in the clinical setting. Being neatly dressed and well-groomed exemplifies a professional appearance. Final dress code interpretation is at the discretion of the faculty.

The dress code is described as business casual. For the PA program, business casual can also be described as the attire appropriate for caring for patients in an outpatient setting.

Each student is required to follow the dress code as outlined below:

Clothing should allow for adequate movement during patient care, and should not be tight, short, low cut or expose the trunk with movement.

Clothing will not be torn, ripped, or dirty/stained and should appear well-maintained.

**Slacks/Pants** - slacks, dress capris, and dress pants are acceptable. Inappropriate slacks or pants include jeans (regardless of color), sweatpants, exercise/yoga pants, shorts of any type, bib overalls, leggings, pajama/lounge pants, or any Spandex, Lycra, or other form-fitting pants.

**Skirts/Dresses** - casual skirts and dresses, and skirts split at or below the knee are acceptable. Dress and skirt length should be at a length at which you can sit comfortably in public, usually mid-thigh or longer. Inappropriate items include short, tight skirts or dresses that are above the mid-thigh, mini-skirts, skorts, sun dresses, beach dresses, or spaghetti-strap dresses.

**Shirts, Tops, Blouses, and Jackets** - casual shirts, dress shirts, sweaters, polo shirts, and turtlenecks are acceptable attire. Most conservative suit jackets or sport jackets are also acceptable attire. Inappropriate attire includes tank tops, tops that expose the midriff, shoulders, or undergarments, shirts with potentially offensive words, abbreviations, or terms, logos, pictures, cartoons, or slogans, halter tops, hooded sweatshirts, and t-shirts unless worn under a blouse, shirt, jacket, or dress.

**Shoes and Footwear** - conservative walking shoes, loafers, clogs, sneakers, boots, flats, dress heels, and leather deck-type shoes are acceptable. Flashy athletic shoes, flip-flops, and slippers are not acceptable. Open toed-shoes and sandals are not appropriate for clinical rotations.

**Makeup, perfume, and cologne** - should be in good taste. Remember, some employees/patients are allergic to the chemicals in perfumes and make-up, so wear these substances with restraint.

**Hats and head covering** - hats are not appropriate while inside unless in a surgical setting. Traditional religious/cultural head covers are allowed.

**Jewelry, watches, wedding bands and/or engagement rings** - are permissible as appropriate.

No excessive bracelets or necklaces. Earrings - no more than two earrings per ear, no dangling or oversized earrings. No other visible body piercings are permitted.

**Nails** - fingernails should be kept trimmed and without nail polish (on clinical sites).

**Tattoos** - students should not exhibit tattoos in normal business attire.

**Hair** - should be clean and well-groomed. Long hair should be pulled back so as to not interfere with patient care.

**Nametags** – that identify students as UofSC SOM PA students is **mandatory** at all times and must be worn on either your lab coat or clothes while at clinical sites.

**Professional attire** – a short, white lab coat will be worn while in the clinical setting and scrubs when appropriate.

When scrubs are worn, they must be matching solid color shirt and pants with undershirt. Examples of appropriate scrubs will be provided.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

1. Social networking is a great way to meet new people, stay in touch with friends, and connect with other students at the University of South Carolina. Visit the university's [social media directory](#) to keep up with the latest news on programs and events and to share your thoughts with the Carolina community.

2. Remember that university policies regarding social media ([Digital Presence: Social Media](#)) including the student code of conduct ([Student Code of Conduct](#)) as well as state and federal laws, apply online. You are responsible for what you say and do through social media just as you are in any other circumstances.

3. Uphold the [Carolinian Creed](#). Respect others and their opinions, engage in civil discourse, and discourage any behavior that threatens personal freedom or dignity.

4. Remember that regardless of your privacy settings, information you share online can become public. Avoid sharing your address, full birthdate, telephone number, class schedule and passwords. Do not post obscene or tasteless material; it could reflect negatively on you now or in the future.

5. Think about your future. An increasing number of admissions officials and employers monitor candidates' social media activities in making their selections. Online behavior has been used to terminate employees and submitted into evidence in legal cases. Be responsible and be careful.

6. If you are the victim of harassing or bullying online activities, contact the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity office at (803) 777-4333 or visit:

## Office of Student Conduct and Integrity

7. No student shall engage with a faculty and/or staff member on a social media site while enrolled in the program unless on approved PA program sites (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram).

### CLASSROOM CONDUCT

- All electronic communication devices must be turned off during class with the exception of a laptop or other notetaking device.
- Cell phone use during class is prohibited for personal use. The only time a student should use their cell phone device is if it is being used for polling or answering questions utilizing interactive software. Students are advised to turn their phones off or to silent during classes.
- No computer/phone use not directly related to class activities will be allowed. For example, instant messaging programs, internet browsing, and similar activities are not allowed during class time.
- Headsets or ear buds are not to be worn during class.
- Violations will be handled accordingly by Course Director with consultation with the Director of Didactic Education and Program Director- repeated failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary action.
- We realize emergencies may arise. We suggest that you give others our general office numbers, (803) 216-3312 or (803) 216-3950. In the event of an emergency, if one of these numbers is called, a faculty or staff member will alert you of the situation.

### PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The PA program has adopted the AAPA Code of Ethics as the framework for our expected professional standards. The PA student's behavior should emulate that of the medical professional as described in the Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics is located in the following link:

[AAPA Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession](#)

In addition the PA program expects all students to:

1. Demonstrate behavior with faculty, staff and student colleagues, and patients that is respectful, mature, and empathetic.
2. Demonstrate tolerance for uncertainty and ability to give and receive constructive feedback from faculty, staff, and student colleagues.
3. Exhibit honesty and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code of UofSC in all exams, quizzes, and graded assignments.
4. Perform responsibly and with accountability by arriving promptly to classes and clinical sites ready to work efficiently and effectively as a team member when assigned.

**The policy on immunization and health screening of students is based on the current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations for health professionals:<sup>16</sup>**

[CDC Recommended Vaccines for Healthcare Workers](#)

### Healthcare Personnel Vaccination Recommendations

**Hepatitis B** - If you don't have documented evidence of a complete hepatitis B vaccine series, or if you don't have an up-to-date blood test that shows you are immune to hepatitis B (i.e., no serologic evidence of immunity or prior vaccination) then you should:

- Get a 3-dose series of Recombivax HB or Engerix-B (dose #1 now, #2 in 1 month, #3 approximately 5 months after #2) or a 2-dose series of Heplisav-B, with the doses separated by at least 4 weeks.
- Get an anti-HBs serologic test 1-2 months after the final dose.

**Flu (Influenza)** - Get 1 dose of influenza vaccine annually.

**MMR (Measles, Mumps, & Rubella)** - If you were born in 1957 or later and have not had the MMR vaccine, or if you don't have an up-to-date blood test that shows you are immune to measles or mumps (i.e., no serologic evidence of immunity or prior vaccination), get 2 doses of MMR (1 dose now and the 2nd dose at least 28 days later). If you were born in 1957 or later and have not had the MMR vaccine, or if you don't have an up-to-date blood test that shows you are immune to rubella, only 1 dose of MMR is recommended. However, you may end up receiving 2 doses, because the rubella component is in the combination vaccine with measles and mumps. For HCWs born before 1957, see the MMR ACIP vaccine recommendations.

**Varicella (Chickenpox)** - If you have not had chickenpox (varicella), if you haven't had varicella vaccine, or if you don't have an up-to-date blood test that shows you are immune to varicella (i.e., no serologic evidence of immunity or prior vaccination) get 2 doses of varicella vaccine, 4 weeks apart.

**Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis)** - Get a one-time dose of Tdap as soon as possible if you have not received Tdap previously (regardless of when previous dose of Td was received). Get Td boosters every 10 years thereafter. Pregnant HCWs need to get a dose of Tdap during each pregnancy.

**Meningococcal** - Those who are routinely exposed to isolates of *N. meningitidis* should get one dose.

**Infection Control for UofSC PA students' immunizations includes required vaccines against measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), meningococcal, and TB screening.**

**Recommended immunizations for Gardasil, hepatitis A&B, varicella, tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap), meningococcal group B<sup>16</sup> can be found at the following site:**

[Student Health Services - Immunizations](#)

Current immunizations are a requirement for clinical rotations. PA students that wish to be exempted from immunizations will not be allowed on clinical rotations. PA students must TB skin test prior to admission and a repeat TB skin test within two months of starting their clinical rotations.

### **INFECTIOUS AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS POLICY<sup>17</sup>**

#### **Policy Concerning Students Exposed to Personal Risk of Serious Infection**

In the care of assigned patients with serious contagious diseases, such as human immunodeficiency virus infection (HIV), hepatitis B or C infection, or tuberculosis, students are expected to participate at their level of competence. A student should not be penalized for questioning whether his/her personal safety is being compromised unnecessarily. Education and training should include instruction intended to maximize the safety of all members of the health care team in situations in which there are increased risks of exposure to infectious agents, including skill in handling or being exposed to sharp objects in diseases transmitted



through blood or secretions and in use of appropriate barriers in airborne and hand- to-mouth infections.

**Policies for UofSC SOM Physician Assistant Program to Bloodborne Pathogens**

Students caring for patients in University of South Carolina School of Medicine (UofSC SOM) affiliated teaching hospitals and clinics experience risk of exposure to several infectious diseases, including hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and human immunodeficiency virus. Consequently, these policies state the required actions expected of all UofSC SOM physician assistant students involved in patient care to prevent transmission of such infections to themselves and to prevent or minimize clinical disease in the event they undergo significant exposure.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention describe the universal precautions approach to preventing fluid borne infections in health care workers. A thorough discussion of this approach is available online:

[CDC/OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard](#)

but the approach can be summarized as follows:

UofSC SOM physician assistant students must practice "Universal Standard" (Universal Precautions) when dealing with patients. The actions described as "Universal Standard" (Universal Precautions) include, but are not limited to:

- Use of barrier protection methods when exposure to blood, body fluids, or mucous membranes if possible.
- Use of gloves for handling blood and body fluids.
- Wearing gloves by students acting as phlebotomists.
- Changing gloves between patients.
- Use of a facial shield when appropriate (during all surgery and any other procedures where eye exposure to airborne material is possible).
- Use of gown and apron for protection from splashing when appropriate.
- Washing hands between patients and if contaminated.
- Washing hands after removal of gloves.
- Avoidance of unnecessary handling of needles or other sharps.
- Careful processing of sharps.
- Appropriate disposal of sharps in sharps containers.
- Avoidance of direct mouth-to-mouth resuscitation contact.
- Minimization of spills and splatters.
- Decontamination of all surfaces and devices after use.

The following actions are specifically required by the UofSC SOM to minimize risk of transmission of infection:

- Gloves will be worn for all parts of the physical examination in which contact might be expected with the oral, genital, or rectal mucosa of a patient. Gloves are also necessary while examining any skin rash that might be infectious (e.g., syphilis, herpes simplex, etc.).
- Gloves will be worn in all procedures that involve risk of exposure to blood or body fluids, including venipuncture, arterial puncture, and lumbar puncture. Gloves will also be worn during any laboratory test on blood, serum, or other blood product, or body fluids.
- Prior to performing a venipuncture, obtain a needle (and syringe) disposal box and place it adjacent to the venipuncture site. After venipuncture, insert the needle (and syringe) immediately in the disposal box. DO NOT recap or remove needles by hand.

Care must be taken to avoid bringing the needle near the body of other persons in the examining room while transferring it to the container.

OSHA requires the use of syringes and other “sharps” designed with safety features that permit safe recapping/closure using one handed techniques and reduce the overall risk needle sticks. These safety devices should be in use at the locations where students rotate. Students should use these safer devices while on clinical rotations and should obtain training from those experienced with using the particular type of device prior to using it themselves. If a safety device does not appear to be readily available, students are strongly encouraged to ask the nurse manager about the availability of a safety device.

- Protective eyewear (such as goggles or a face shield) should be worn when participating in surgical procedures or other activities in which exposure to airborne blood or body fluids (via aerosolization or splashes) may occur.

### **Post Exposure Evaluation and Follow-Up**

Following a report of blood/body fluid exposure incident, the UofSC School of Medicine shall make immediately available to the exposed student a confidential medical evaluation and follow-up that includes the following elements:

- Documentation of the route(s) of exposure, and the circumstances under which the exposure incident occurred;
- Identification and documentation of the source individual, unless the employer can establish that identification is infeasible or prohibited by state or local law;
- The source individual's blood shall be tested as soon as feasible in order to determine HBV and HIV infectivity. South Carolina law permits testing of source patients to be performed, even without consent, with proper legal authority.
- Results of the source individual's testing shall be made available to the exposed student, and the student shall be informed of applicable laws and regulations concerning disclosure of the identity and infectious status of the source individual.

### **Procedures to Follow After a Potential BBP Exposure**

Exposed students should wash the area thoroughly (soap and water if skin involvement, water if eye involvement) and notify their supervisor of the incident immediately. If a supervisor is not immediately available, they should contact the Employee Health office without delay.

Any student that experiences an exposure incident will be offered an immediate medical evaluation, post-exposure evaluation and follow-up in accordance with the OSHA standard. Post-exposure follow-up will be provided (or in some cases arranged) by the UofSC School of Medicine Employee Health Service. Management will include counseling regarding risks, evaluation of the medical risk and of reported illnesses, and treatment and follow-up as indicated.

The UofSC School of Medicine Employee/Student Health office shall be contacted immediately following an exposure to blood and/or body fluids. The contact numbers for the UofSC School of Medicine Employee/Student Health office, in order of preference, are:

- Jennifer Evans, RN: (803) 216-3374, Cell (618) 559-0419
- Olabisi Badmus, MD, MPH: 803-434-2206, pager (803) 352-0576
- Department of Family and Preventive Medicine administrative office: (803) 434-6113

The exposed student may or may not need to present in person to the Employee/Student Health office, depending on the nature of the exposure and the availability of the ‘source patient’ for testing. The student will be instructed by Employee/Student Health staff regarding whether a face to face consultation is necessary. The Employee/Student Health office is located in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine at 3209 Colonial Drive, Columbia, SC 29203.

Students with exposures occurring after 4:00 p.m., on weekends or holidays, or in a facility other than the UofSC School of Medicine or Prisma Health, should immediately report the exposure to the supervisor/charge nurse and follow institutional policies for notifying the appropriate employee health, infection control, or clinical administrator of the facility in which the individual is working. The UofSC School of Medicine Employee Health office should be notified of the exposure as soon as possible.

For students rotating at the Dorn Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (DVAMC), specific instructions are:

Dorn Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (DVAMC):

During working hours, the student should immediately report to the Employee Health Clinic (call ext. 6530 or pager 084, Room 1B116 [Bldg. 22]) for evaluation and treatment. After working hours, report to the DVAMC Urgent Care. If there is a problem receiving treatment at the Urgent Care, the student should call the Medical Officer of the Day (MOD) directly or by asking the operator to page him/her.

As soon as possible on the next business day, the student should notify Jennifer Evans, RN, the employee health nurse at the UofSC School of Medicine Employee/Student Health Office (803) 216-3374; Cell (618) 559-0419.

### **Collection and testing of blood from the Source Patients for HCV, HBV and HIV**

In order to properly evaluate a student following an exposure to potentially infectious blood or body fluid, testing for blood-borne pathogen infection should be conducted on the “source patient,” assuming the source of the exposure is known. Each clinical department should have a protocol to follow that includes testing of the “source patient” for infection with HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. The student’s supervisor and/or clinical staff in the department should be able to ensure that the proper tests are ordered without delay. The source patient tests to order are:

- Rapid HIV antibody
- Hepatitis B surface antigen
- Hepatitis C antibody

If there are any questions regarding what tests should be ordered or how to order them, or if the student is unable to find a supervisor or clinical employee who can order the needed tests, he/she should call the UofSC School of Medicine Employee/Student Health nurse right away at 803-434- 2479 or page her at 803-303-0035. To expedite the process, the student should know the patient’s name and medical record number.

### **Post-Exposure Collection and testing of blood from Student for HCV, HBV and HIV**

Testing the student is not necessary unless the source patient tests positive for a blood-borne infection. If the source patient tests positive for one of the above infections, the exposed student's blood shall be collected as soon as feasible and tested.

Post-exposure prophylaxis, when medically indicated, will be provided as recommended by the U.S. Public Health Service.

### **Prevention of Other Infections in the Healthcare Setting**

A number of other significant infections can be acquired in the healthcare setting. For this reason, frequent handwashing and/or hand cleansing with antimicrobial cleansers is recommended. In addition, all isolation requirements must be observed. Patients who are on isolation should be identified by the healthcare institution, and the types of precautions necessary should be described outside the patient's room. Students are required to abide by all isolation/infection control policies of the institution where they are rotating.

When in contact with patients with certain respiratory infections, the use of OSHA-certified N-95 respirators is required. All physician assistant students must undergo respirator fit testing prior to beginning of their clinical rotations. Students should only use the specific model and size of respirator for which they were fitted. Those who have a beard or did not pass fit testing must use a powered air purifying respirator (PAPR) rather than the N-95 mask and should familiarize themselves ahead of time with the procedures for obtaining a PAPR if needed, in the institution where they are rotating.

Regardless of the location of care, physician assistant students should identify themselves specifically as UofSC SOM PA students seeking evaluation and treatment for education-related exposures. Students will not be held financially responsible for any infectious or environmental hazards that they are exposed to and required treatment.

## **SECTION 5 ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Student Load**

Physician assistant education is a full-time endeavor. The academic year schedule is Monday thru Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Students enrolled in the PA Program are required to participate in all scheduled classes and should expect to be available during these hours.

### **Program of Study**

Study is designed to deliver the essential academic and clinical education necessary to prepare students for their professional roles and to satisfy the eligibility requirements to sit for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE). The Program is divided into four didactic semesters over a 15 month period and three clinical semesters over a 12 month period.

### **Student Work Policy**

1. Students are discouraged from working in any form of employment while enrolled in the UofSC PA program.<sup>18</sup>
2. Outside activities and working are not considered to be valid excuses for poor academic performance or lack of attendance at required PA program activities.
3. PA students may not work for the program and will never substitute for or function as instructional faculty, clinical or administrative staff.<sup>19,20</sup>
4. Students enrolled in the PA program cannot substitute for practicing physician assistants or provide unsupervised services common to a certified PA while at any learning or employment site while enrolled in the program.<sup>20</sup>
5. Students are not staff or employees of the program while in the role of a student and as a result may not earn a stipend or salary for their services as a physician assistant student.
6. Students credentialed as other non-PA professionals cannot substitute as faculty or staff in their credentialed discipline while in the role of a physician assistant student.
7. Students failing to follow the above Student Work Policy will be subject to disciplinary action including the range of probation to dismissal from the program.

### **General PA Program Attendance Policies and Procedures**

1. Classroom attendance is MANDATORY except for emergencies.
  - a. Only in cases of a family emergency, personal illness, injury, or mental health issues will you be excused. Absences or potential absences will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Directors of Didactic and Clinical Education, Program Director, and/or clinical preceptor.
  - b. Business appointments, routine dental and medical appointments, weddings, graduations, and other social events are NOT valid reasons for absenteeism. However, it is understood that unforeseen incidents do occur during this program that will require a student to miss class. We will allow one personal day per semester and prior notice is required. Partially missed days will count as a full personal day.
  - c. Absences due to illness of two consecutive days or longer will require clearance to excuse the absence and return to the program.
  - d. Clearance must be completed by a licensed physician, PA, NP, or mental health provider and submitted to the program for inclusion in the student file. This cannot be issued by clergy, family, or a faculty member.
  - e. In the event of the passing of an immediate family member, an excused

- absence of three days will be allowed for bereavement.
- f. The final determination of any absence or “true emergency” will be at the discretion of the Directors of Didactic and Clinical Education and/or Program Director.
  - g. Being absent on the day of a test or practical exam is an unexcused absence and you will receive a grade of zero unless you can provide documentation that explains why the absence should be excused.
2. A student **MUST** notify the Director of Didactic Education the night before or by 8:00 AM the day of the absence by calling (803) 216-3961 and leaving a message. The student must do this for every day that they are absent. Sending a message through a classmate is **NOT** acceptable.
  3. The consequences for excessive absences greater than two days (whether excused or unexcused) will be determined by the Director of Didactic Education and the SPPC.
    - The responsibility for notifying the Director of Didactic Education of anticipated absences, reasons for emergency absences, and how all assignments will be completed, rests entirely on the student.
    - PA program faculty and course directors outside the program are not expected or required to give make-up exams or quizzes for unexcused absences.
    - If a student chooses to take unexcused absences, each day missed will result in one point being deducted from the final course grade in all PA program courses (excluding Anatomy and Physiology). Greater than two unexcused absences will result in a meeting with the SPPC and may result in a disciplinary action, failing grades, and possible dismissal from the program.

### **Tardy Policy**

Students should arrive 10 minutes before any scheduled event. Faculty has the discretion of not allowing a student to enter the classroom after class begins. Documentation will be maintained in the student’s file and will be one component of the professional reference given to all perspective employees. Excessive tardiness will be considered a professionalism issue and the student will be referred to the SPPC for violations greater than three instances.

**SECTION 6  
DIDACTIC COURSE OF STUDY AND CURRICULAR COMPONENTS<sup>21</sup>**

Unless otherwise stated, all courses must be successfully completed in sequence and during the semester offered in order to progress to the next semester<sup>8</sup>

**Didactic Year**

**PA Program Curriculum:**

Spring Year 1		
PHPH 701	Physiology for Health Sciences	6 credit hours
BMSC 740	Human Anatomy for Health Sciences	6 credit hours
BMSC 745	Medical Interviewing	2 credit hours
BMSC 753	PA Professional Practice	1 credit hour
Total:		15 credit hours

Summer Year 1		
BMSC 766	PA Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics I	7 credit hours
BMSC 746	Physical Diagnosis	6 credit hours
BMSC 755	Medical Genetics and Laboratory Diagnostics	2 credit hours
BMSC 752	Medical Law and Ethics	2 credit hours
		17 credit hours

Fall Year 1		
BMSC 767	PA Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics II	6 credit hours
BMSC 768	PA Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics III	6 credit hours
BMSC 751	Behavioral Medicine	2 credit hours
BMSC 756	Advancing Medical Practice through Research	3 credit hours
BMSC 747	Diagnostic Testing	2 credit hours
Total:		19 credit hours

Spring Year 2		
BMSC 769	PA Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics IV	7 credit hours
BMSC 770	Clinical Skills Lab	3 credit hours
BMSC 748	Surgery and Emergency Medicine	2 credit hours
BMSC 743	Clinical Immersion for PAs	2 credit hours
BMSC 744	Interprofessional Seminar	1 credit hour
BMSC 749	Clinical Medicine Across the Lifespan	2 credit hours
Total:		17 credit hours

**SECTION 7  
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

## Student Disability Resource Center

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The Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) empowers students to manage challenges and limitations imposed by disabilities. Our professionally trained staff provides students with exceptional services as they transition to college or continue their studies at the University. The office serves students with learning, physical, health, or psychiatric disabilities in managing the varying demands of the University experience. In addition to serving students, the staff assists the University community in making programs, services, and activities accessible for everyone.

For students registered with the SDRC, visit the [SDRC homepage](#).

To apply for accommodations, to request forms or additional information, please visit the [Register With Us](#) page for more information. If you are planning on applying for accommodations, you should start the application process as soon as you are admitted to the university.

## Student Registration Checklist

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The registration process can take 2 or more weeks to complete. Although parents and others may assist, students should complete the application themselves and must attend their SDRC orientation. Generally, the steps in the registration process are:

1. **Complete the [Application Process](#).** Don't forget to **print a copy for your records** before submitting.
2. In addition to the information you provide to us on the application, **documentation related to your disability is also needed** to assist in determining the appropriate accommodations to help you be successful. Please refer to the [Request Accommodations](#) page for further information.
3. **Send the documentation to our office:**

ATTACHED to the online application form.  
FAX to (803) 777-6741  
EMAIL to [sasds@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sasds@mailbox.sc.edu)  
IN PERSON at LeConte College, Room 112A

Please remember to include your full name and date of birth on all documentation. Your medical provider may also submit the documentation directly to our office. If your documentation is not sufficient, we may request more from you. The faster this part of the process is completed, the better.



4. When we have received all documentation, you will get a letter from our office telling you that your file is complete and in process. This part of the process can take 2 or more weeks.
5. Once your file is reviewed, you will get an email from our office requesting that you call the office at (803) 777-6142 to schedule your SDRC Orientation. Please note that you will not be able to access services without completing this step.
6. Attend OSDS Orientation.

Your registration will then be complete. At that point, you will be able to access accommodations through our office to help you succeed.

If you have any questions or concerns about the process, please do not hesitate to call our office at (803) 777-6142 or email us at [sasds@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sasds@mailbox.sc.edu).

Educational Testing  
Marc Harari, PhD  
Comprehensive Psychological Services  
[Comprehensive Psychological Services Website](#)  
(803) 422-0017

Multiple services are offered for students through UofSC, a complete listing is provided at: [Office of the Provost - Policies and Procedures](#)

#### **UofSC Student Health Services<sup>22</sup>**

Multiple services are offered through the UofSC Student Health Center including medical, mental health (counseling and psychiatry), and wellness & prevention. A complete listing is available at their website:

[Student Health Services](#)  
Phone: (803) 777-3175

PA Program principal faculty, the program director, and the medical director are NOT allowed to participate as a PA student's health care provider unless it is an emergency - please do not ask any faculty member to consult on a personal health issue or see them in a clinical setting.<sup>23</sup>

PA faculty, staff, and students may contact UofSC Counseling & Psychiatry at (803) 777-5223 to make a same day referral or after hours crisis for students to address urgent personal issues which may impact their progress in the PA Program.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Student Care and Outreach Team<sup>22</sup>**

If you are ever imminently concerned about someone's health, well-being, or safety, submit a Care Team referral. Anyone who feels a student is a risk to themselves or the community can

make a Care Team referral; including students, parents, faculty and staff, and other community members.

[Student Care and Outreach \(Care Team\)](#)

[Student Care and Outreach Team Incident Report](#)

### **Campus Ministry**

Spiritual guidance can be found on campus utilizing this website:

[Garnet Gate](#) and searching “ministry”.

### **Chemical Dependency**

**Definitions.** Substance abuse is characterized as insidious, progressive, chronic, malignant, primary, family-centered, and treatable. The medical consequences resulting from impairment from substance abuse range from a mild hangover to death due to bleeding, infection, or trauma. For students, impairment is defined as recurring trouble associated with alcohol or drug abuse; the trouble may occur in any of several domains, including interpersonal (family or other relationships), educational, legal, financial, or medical. Examples include the range of behaviors from absences from class, clinical clerkships, and electives; repeated lateness in the initiation or completion of assigned responsibilities; binge drinking to violence while under the influence of chemicals; traffic accidents and arrests for driving under the influence; attempts to reduce chemical use; receipt of criticism about alcohol and/or drug use from fellow students, faculty members, medical residents, and other clinical supervisors; and, most especially, the student’s continued drinking and/or drug use in spite of adverse consequences.

**Sources of assistance.** Confidential assistance for students with suspected chemical dependency impairment may be obtained from any of the following sources:

Students concerned about their use/abuse of chemical substances and/or that of their peers may obtain confidential assistance by contacting UofSC Counseling and Psychiatry (803) 777-5223, the Psychological Services Center (803) 777-7302 or the Thomson Student Health Center (803) 777-3175, all on the Columbia campus of the University of South Carolina. Additionally, the School of Medicine Department of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Science (803) 434-4300 provides confidential assessment, referral, and treatment.

Other resources: A comprehensive listing of statewide educational, counseling, and referral resources for problems related to chemical dependency is available from the Department of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Science; see above. An additional list of resources is published annually by the University of South Carolina in the Carolina Community: Student Handbook and Policy Guide. The Carolina Community also contains those university policies and procedures relating to the use of alcohol and other drugs to which all enrolled university students are subject as members of the University community.

### **Harassment Policies and Procedures<sup>24</sup>**

Medical offices, operating rooms, emergency rooms and hospitals are all institutions where the very serious business of taking care of people's health and lives occur. Employees often use humor as a means of stress relief; however, their humor should never make another person feel as though they have been harassed or create a hostile work environment. If an incident occurs where you feel in imminent danger, clearly communicate your distress by any means possible, remove yourself from the situation, and call 911. If you feel that an incident has occurred that is not one of imminent danger, you should report the incident to the Director of Clinical Education and UofSC's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

#### [Report and Incident Process](#)

#### **Sexual Harassment<sup>24</sup>**

The UofSC PA program recognizes that harassment on the basis of sex is a violation of the law. The University of South Carolina School of Medicine is committed to an environment free from explicit and/or implicit coercive sexual behavior used to affect the well-being of members of this academic community. Sexual harassment is unacceptable and grounds for disciplinary action. Students who wish to file a complaint alleging Sexual Harassment should do so by contacting the office of Equal Opportunity Programs. Persons observing sexual harassment should also report the matter to the office Equal Opportunity Programs.

[Equal Opportunity Programs](#) homepage

#### **Medical Insurance**

Students enrolled in the UofSC School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program are required to have a current medical insurance policy in effect at the time of matriculation and throughout the academic year and to provide the UofSC PA program with verification and proof of insurance or must sign a formal declaration waiver form.

A comprehensive health insurance policy is made available by Pearce & Pearce, Inc. through the University of South Carolina for students and their spouses and/or children. Brochures and registration materials are available to all students. The policy is in effect from August 1st to July 31st, with fee payment due at the time of fall and spring registrations.

## SECTION 8 STUDENT MISTREATMENT POLICY

The PA Program is dually housed in the School of Medicine and The Graduate School. The educational program has been developed to support and encourage the collegiality and professionalism essential to an effective learning environment. Students who believe that they have been punitively assessed or mistreated because of religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age or other factors have access to the Graduate School ombuds, currently Dale Moore.

[Graduate School Ombuds](#) homepage

His contact information is e-mail: [dm@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:dm@mailbox.sc.edu) Phone: (803) 777-4243

The ombudspersons are empowered to receive and investigate reports of mistreatment in a completely confidential manner, to mediate between the parties involved, and, in the event mediation is not successful, to make recommendations directly to the Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School regarding appropriate resolution of any complaints.

The use of the ombudspersons' services to resolve a complaint represents a form of alternate dispute resolution. For this reason, the services of the ombudspersons will no longer be available to a student once that student engages an attorney to initiate legal action against the School of Medicine, the University of South Carolina, or the employees of those institutions.

Other resources:

Academic grievances: [Academic Grievance Policy](#)

Non-Academic grievances: [Non-academic Student Grievance Policy](#)

Graduate School Grievances, Appeals and Petitions Form: [Graduate - Grievances, Appeals, and Petitions Form](#)

Sexual Harassment: [Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

Bias or hate incident: [Report an Incident](#)

Policies related to student relationship violence, stalking, and harassment are available online: [Relationship Violence, Stalking, and Harassment Policy](#)

## UofSC Honor Code

It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina Columbia to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this Honor Code or who knowingly assists another to violate this Honor Code shall be subject to discipline.

[Academic Responsibility - The Honor Code](#)

# Carolinian Creed

The community of scholars at the **University of South Carolina** is dedicated to personal and academic excellence.

Choosing to join the community obligates each member to a code of civilized behavior.

## As a Carolinian...

*I will practice personal and academic integrity;*

•

*I will respect the dignity of all persons;*

•

*I will respect the rights and property of others;*

•

*I will discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions;*

•

*I will demonstrate concern for others, their feelings, and their need for conditions which support their work and development.*

Allegiance to these ideals requires each Carolinian to refrain from and discourage behaviors which threaten the freedom and respect every individual deserves.



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA





## **UofSC Honor Code and Carolinian Creed Acknowledgement Form**

The UofSC SOM Physician Assistant Studies Program

My signature below serves two purposes:

First, it acknowledges my receipt of the UofSC Honor Code and Carolinian Creed.

Second, it confirms my willingness to conduct myself accordingly.

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Student Name (Printed Legibly)

---

Student Signature

---

Date



## **Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form**

The UofSC SOM Physician Assistant Program

My signature below serves two purposes:

First, it acknowledges my receipt of the UofSC Physician Assistant Didactic Student Handbook and that I was given ample time to read as well as discuss any questions I have regarding the content therein with the program faculty and administration.

Second, it confirms my willingness to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in the program's physician assistant student handbook.

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Student Name (Printed Legibly)

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Student Signature

---

Date



### **Participation of Students as Human Subjects**

I understand that as part of my experience at the UofSC Physician Assistant Program I will be required to participate as a living subject and an examiner during the Didactic Phase of the program. The program faculty expect that students will be willing, professional, and cooperative in participating in the physical examination courses and practicums.

I understand that I need to come to laboratories prepared and that I may be required to partially disrobe. I also understand that shorts will be required when examining the lower extremities. Upper body, including thorax, abdomen, and extremities will be examined. Males should remove their shirts and women should wear sports bras so they will be able to remove their shirts.

I understand that participation will not include breast or genitalia examinations. These examinations will be learned with the use of mannequins and/or professional patients.

I understand that faculty expect all students to dress as listed above for the designated activities and be willing to be inspected, palpated, percussed, and auscultated by their peers.

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by this policy.

---

Student Name (Printed Legibly)

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Student Signature

---

Date





School of Medicine

### Absence Form

**Student Only:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Requested Date of Absence: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Absence:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\*Please note if two or more days missed for illness, you must attach a note from a medical provider.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty only:**

**Course Director #1** Approved or Denied: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Course Director #2 (If needed)** Approved or Denied: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty Mentor** Approved or Denied: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The contents of this didactic handbook are subject to change in ways that will improve accuracies of the Program's accreditation status, reflect changes in didactic requirements, and update UofSC SOM and PA Program policies. Any changes will be announced as soon as possible after they are made.

Revised October 2021

### **References**

1. ARC-PA Standard A3.01
2. ARC-PA Standard A3.02
3. ARC-PA Standard A3.12b
4. ARC-PA Standard A3.12c
5. ARC-PA Standard A3.12a
6. ARC-PA Standard A3.12e
7. ARC-PA Standard A3.15a
8. ARC-PA Standard A3.15b
9. ARC-PA Standard A3.15c
10. ARC-PA Standard A3.15d
11. ARC-PA Standard A3.15f
12. ARC-PA Standard A3.15g
13. ARC-PA Standard A1.02k
14. ARC-PA Standards A3.17a-f
15. ARC-PA Standard A3.18
16. ARC-PA Standard A3.07a
17. ARC-PA Standards A3.08a-c
18. ARC-PA Standard A3.15e
19. ARC-PA Standard A3.04
20. ARC-PA Standard A3.05
21. ARC-PA Standard A3.12d
22. ARC-PA Standard A3.10
23. ARC-PA Standard A3.09
24. ARC-PA Standard A1.02j